



STATE OF MARYLAND

DHMH PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

DHMH Issues Consumer Alert Regarding Face Creams Containing Mercury

Baltimore, MD (November 15, 2011) -- The Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) today issued a warning to consumers about certain skin creams that may contain mercury. One such product, labeled “Crema Aguamary,” and purchased in Mexico, was brought into Maryland and is thought to be responsible for at least one case of mercury poisoning in the State.

Use of these skin creams can cause serious health effects, including memory problems and problems with the nervous system, kidneys, skin, blood pressure, and digestive tract. Unborn babies, infants, and children are especially sensitive to the effects of mercury. Use of these products by pregnant women and nursing mothers is therefore of special concern. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration prohibits the sale of skin-bleaching products containing mercury in the United States.

Consumers should not use face creams or skin-lightening products that contain “mercury,” “mercurio,” “mercuric,” “mercurous,” or “calomel.” If skin cream labels do not contain a listing of ingredients, consumers are also encouraged to stop using the product. The material should be washed from the skin with soap and water. Consumers who have concerns that they may have been exposed to mercury from these products should contact their health care provider. Consumers who have face cream that they believe contains mercury should seal the jar in a plastic bag or leak-proof container and dispose of it in their household trash. DHMH is not testing any product for mercury at this time.

Consumers with questions may contact the Maryland Poison Center toll-free 24 hours a day at 1-800-222-1222; or the DHMH Center for Environmental Health and Community Services toll-free at 1-866-703-3266 Monday through Friday, between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. Eastern time.

A fact sheet in English and Spanish on mercury-containing skin products can be found at <http://ideha.dhmh.maryland.gov/pdf/factsheets/facecream.aspx>.

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